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RUEHCN/AMCONSUL CHENGDU 1345
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RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 6690
RUEHGH/AMCONSUL SHANGHAI 0275
RUEHSH/AMCONSUL SHENYANG 5307
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TAIPEI 002536

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SUBJECT: KMT FIGHTS CORRUPTION BY LOCALIZING CENTRAL
STANDING COMMITTEE ELECTIONS

REF: TAIPEI 02495

Classified By: Director Stephen M. Young, Reason(s): 1.4 (B/D).

11. (C) Summary. The KMT, in a break from previous practice, will not hold a Taipei convention to conduct this weekend's election of Central Standing Committee (CSC) members, a party official told AIT. Instead, the electors will cast ballots at their respective local party headquarters. KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou, who announced the change last year, hopes the dispersed voting will reduce vote-buying and improve the image of the party. Because the CSC elections traditionally favor incumbents and well-known legislators, the new voting method is not expected to have much effect on the composition of the CSC. End Summary.

12. (C) Kuomintang (KMT) Organizational Director Liao Feng-te recently discussed the upcoming KMT Central Standing Committee (CSC) election, scheduled for July 29, with AIT. (Note: The KMT currently has 210 Central Committee members, all of whom are eligible to run in the election. The 31 members of the Central Standing Committee will be chosen from the 210 Central Committee members by 1,532 party delegates. The newly-elected CSC members will serve one-year terms. End note.) Traditionally, Liao said, party delegates cast their votes during a convention in Taipei. With all the delegates concentrated in one place, the convention fostered vote-buying. Candidates would host expensive dinners for delegates and give lavish gifts in exchange for votes. The media invariably portrayed these "campaign events" as examples of KMT corruption and cronyism. In an attempt to curtail vote-buying, and to reduce the chances of bad publicity, KMT Chairman Ma Ying-jeou announced last year that party delegates would no longer convene in Taipei to cast their ballots, and instead would vote at their respective local KMT headquarters, located around the island.

13. (C) According to Liao, the new "local voting" rules also forbid Central Committee members from attending hosted dinners or receiving gifts, or from participating in non-party sponsored meetings. At Ma's instruction, Liao said, senior party leaders have also actively discouraged those with serious public image problems from standing for election to the CSC.

14. (C) Liao admitted that the new local voting procedure was unlikely to entirely eliminate vote-buying, noting that where

there is a will, there is always a way. In addition, there will be no way to regulate possible vote swapping or quid pro quo arrangements. However, the switch to "local voting" should reduce criticism from the press and the Pan-Greens that KMT party elections are tainted by vote-buying. Liao also noted that by canceling the convention, the KMT and its members will save a significant amount of money.

Comment

¶5. (C) This move towards "local voting" is the latest in a series of measures promoted by Ma to reform and improve the image of the KMT. While the changes are likely to reduce the most conspicuous forms of vote-buying, they will have only limited effect on the composition of the Central Standing Committee itself. Post will report on this issue septel after the election.

¶6. (U) Note: This cable was drafted by Political Intern Eugene Chen.
YOUNG